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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000624

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: SOUTHERN NIGERIA POLITICAL TIDBITS FOR JULY/AUGUST
2007

REF: LAGOS 506

Classified By: Acting Consul General Donald McConnell for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (SBU) Summary: Musings on the national political scene. Imo State Governor appoints Iwu family members. MASSOB leaders dismiss Yar'Adua's promise to pay Biafran pensions as propaganda. Some biographical tidbits on the new ministers. End summary.

Musings on Political Realignment

12. (C) In a meeting with Poloff, Osita Ogbu, Executive Director of the Centre for the Advancement of Democracy and Rule of Law, claimed the division between former President Obasanjo and Vice-President Atiku Abubakar had strengthened the opposition, as Atiku's opposition to the third term initiative had attracted civil society activists to support his Action Congress (AC) party. In Ogbu's opinion, the AC had become the only true political opposition to the People's Democratic Party (PDP), as while the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) had more states in its control its leaders had chosen to support their northern brother Yar'Adua, Ogbu asserted. Ogbu ridiculed the notion of a Government of National Unity, arguing that "peace, reconciliation, and unity outside justice do not achieve peace". Ogbu contended that after the April elections stole the Nigerians' right to award a mandate, President Yar'Adua could not remedy this by compensating certain individuals with ministerial appointments.

Imo State Governor Appoints Iwu Family Members

13. (SBU) Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman Maurice Iwu continued to consolidate his power in Imo State. People's Progressive Alliance (PPA) Governor Ikedi Ohakim appointed four Iwu relatives to positions in the state, including Iwu's younger brother, now the third-highest ranking official in the state as State Secretary General (SSG). It is widely believed Iwu, who desired a candidate from his home zone of Okigwe, engineered Ohakim's election after the Governor acquiesced to demands by Iwu and former Governor Achike Udenwa for control of a slate of appointments

in the state.

Yar'Adua's Promises of a Pension for
Biafran Veterans Mere "Propaganda"

¶4. (C) In a meeting with Poloff, representatives of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) Gideon Nwachukwu and S.C. Ajah contended the recent promise by President Yar'Adua to pay the pensions of former Biafran officers was "mere propaganda". Neither MASSOB representative believed Yar'Adua would deliver on his promise. While a court hearing for MASSOB leader Ralph Uwazuruike's was scheduled for September 18, Nwachukwu claimed Uwazuruike would remain incarcerated since he refused to sign a statement renouncing Biafran sovereignty.

Give Yar'Adua a Year, Says Ebonyi State Governor

¶5. (U) When Poloff asked Ebonyi State Governor Martin Elechi about Yar'Adua's performance, Elechi declined saying it was proper to withhold judgment on Yar'Adua until his one year anniversary.

Bio Tidbits on the New Ministers

¶6. (U) Elechi told Poloff the Minister of Education, Igwe Wachukwu, is a former university lecturer whose father was the first education minister in the First Republic. So now

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Wachukwu has become the Education Minister just like his father, Elechi commented.

¶7. (C) Ogbu said Fidelia Njeze, the Minister of State for Defence, is a pharmacist chosen by Governor Sullivan Chime. Former Governor Chimaroke Nnamani recommended three candidates, including the former Enugu deputy state assembly leader, but Chime asserted his independence by rejecting Nnamani's choices and selected Njeze from his home zone.

¶8. (U) Minister of Commerce and Industry Charles Ugwu is an Obasanjo favorite who was briefly the PDP gubernatorial candidate in Imo State until the Supreme Court ruled the party erred in substituting Ugwu for Senator Ifeanyi Araraume. Prior to this, Ugwu was best known as a staunch supporter of the third term initiative.

MCCONNELL